

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

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NO. 44.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

From the Universalist Magazine.

Our readers cannot but feel interested in the following communication, nor do we think that our replying to our Methodist brother's letter will be displeasing to even the best informed of our faith, though the arguments which we return may not be new to them.—Perhaps some may say, we have understood all these things, and are sorry that time should be occupied in refuting arguments which have become obsolete, having been refuted times without number. But, brethren, we must be patient; we must not forget how hard it was for us to give up the doctrines of men; and remembering our own former situation, must thereby learn to have compassion on those who are out of the way, in imitation of our merciful high-priest.

Rome, (N. Y.) Feb. 6, 1821.

MY WORTHY FRIEND,—With sentiments of respect and christian affection, I presume to address you, being prompted thereto, by a solicitous regard for your welfare. I perused with anxiety and astonishment, your last epistle to Frances; and doubting not the sincerity of your late profession, I felt impelled as an advocate for truth, to attempt a refutation of the system which you have embraced. You assert your belief in the final salvation of all men. How can this assertion be reconciled with Matt. xxv. 46, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment but the righteous into life *eternal*." Is it said to evade this plain declaration of our Lord, that the word *everlasting* in this passage is limited. I answer, any person acquainted with the original language, will readily admit, that *everlasting* and *eternal* are from the very same root; consequently, I have as much authority to affirm that the happiness of the righteous is limited, as you have the punishment of the wicked. You will probably ask, why it was not translated *eternal* punishment. To which

I would reply; the harmony of a sentence requires an agreeable diversification of words; and an established rule in composition, requires, that one word is not to be used twice in a sentence, when another word of synonymous import can be obtained. This was the probable reason why this diversity was used. Upon the true signification of the word *everlasting*, in this passage your doctrine stands, or falls. It is acknowledged that the words are both limited in certain places in the sacred scriptures. The extent of their duration, is determined only by the terminations of the periods to which they are applied. When referring to time, they end when time expires, but when applied to *eternity*, they are bounded or limited only by it; consequently, when eternity ends, then will end also the punishment of the wicked. Another inquiry will probably arise in your mind. Has not the adorable Jesus tasted death for every man? To this scriptural and heart cheering doctrine, my heart assents. As all fell in the loins of Adam, and became subjects of the divine displeasure, Rom. v. 18. even so all are restored through the second Adam (Jesus) to a justified state, (or a salvation from the guilt of original sin.) This is further confirmed by the express declarations of our Lord. Ezekiel xviii. 20, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." Hence we see that Jesus has tasted death to release man from the condemnation of original sin. All therefore, who die destitute of a knowledge of good and evil, are unconditionally saved. For our actual transgression only are we accountable. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Our salvation from these is conditional. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." I acknowledge that the merits of Christ are sufficiently extensive to embrace the whole

world: yet I find not the least assurance from the word of God, that the application of those merits will be made to any, but those who repent and believe the gospel. It is true that a fountain is opened in the house of David, for sin and uncleanness: but it will finally profit none but those who wash themselves therein. It is said, 1 Tim. ii. iv. "That God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Yet this will is conditional, and not absolute. As free moral agents, "God invites us ardently but not compels." Hear Jesus proclaiming his willingness to save the rebellious Jews, Matt. xxiii. 37, 38, "How often would I have gathered you, &c. but *ye would not*." And whilst he confirms, by this declaration, their agency and ability, he justly proceeds to pronounce the sentence of their condemnation. The apostle declares if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, &c. That the death of the soul is here intended is evident, for the death of the body is the common lot of all. The expression is similar to, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." With candour reconcile the following passage of scripture with the doctrine of Universal salvation. Heb. iii. 11, "So I swear in my wrath they *shall not* enter into my rest." Here is no limitation, but a perpetual or eternal deprivation of that rest which remains for the people of God. The Saviour declares, that there is a danger of losing the soul, by that important exclamation, "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Many more passages and arguments might be adduced, I think, to refute the doctrine now in question: but I forbear—and to your candid and prayerful attention, I would recommend the word of God. Remember, Nancy, that in renouncing those truths which you formerly embraced, you expose yourself to the attacks of doubt and uncertainty: You leave the plain and beaten track of truth, and wander in the wild and devious

mazes of scepticism and error: You embrace that doctrine which strikes at the root of the divine perfections, overthrows the restraint of the wicked, and which I awfully fear will prove the destruction of its adherents. Forgive me for my plainness of speech when I assure you that it proceeds from an anxious and sincere regard for your prosperity and happiness. I exhort you in mercy to yourself and friends, not to listen to the sophisms of mistaken men. You are drawing near the borders of the grave. How important it is that you should have the unerring light of truth for your guide and support.—Then like a triumphant conqueror, rising from the slumbers of the tomb, it shall procure you an admittance into that kingdom, where faith is lost in vision and hope in fruition.

Farewell,

GEORGE WHITE.

Miss NANCY WILLIAMS.

REPLY,

To the foregoing, by the Editor of the Universalist Magazine, in compliance with the ardent request of the sister to whom it was sent.

DEAR SIR, AND BROTHER,—Entertaining no doubts concerning your sincerity, and affectionate feelings, we proceed in the same sincerity and christian affection to reply to your very friendly communication. In doing this, we must beg the liberty to be as concise as possible, and that no offence be taken, as we assure you none will be offered designedly.

Your first question is this; how can the final salvation of all men be reconciled with Matt. xxv. 46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."—After reciting this passage, you proceed to inform your sister, that the words everlasting and eternal are from the same Greek word; and that you have as good a right to limit the life of the righteous, as another has to limit the punishment of the wicked. Now, dear brother, what need was there of making these observations respecting the word in the Greek, which is rendered everlasting and eternal in our translation? Those remarks are not calculated to enlighten the person to whom your letter was addressed. It is

not very likely that she could turn you to Matt. xxviii. 20, where we read; "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end *του αἰῶνος* of the world, and tell you that this Greek word is the root of that which is rendered everlasting and eternal in chapter xxv. 46. But we are not to suppose that you are ignorant of this. However, it might be out of your mind at the time you wrote. Now as no one supposes that Jesus meant, he would be with his disciples, in their ministry, until the end of eternity, so no one ought to contend that the word or its derivations which the translators, sometimes rendered world, and sometimes everlasting, and sometimes eternal, is at all admissible in proof of endless, unmerciful punishment. But, sir, why should I contend with you about this question? You grant that the words, on which you lay all this stress, "are both limited in certain cases." Well, if limited in any case, let it, for the honour of God, and for the honour of his grace, manifested through a Redeemer, be limited when applied to punishment. In the Greek Testament, the same word occurs, Matt. xii. 32; where we read in our common translation as follows, "But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." You would not be willing to contend that the Saviour meant to say; neither in this eternity, neither in the eternity to come. The learned Wakefield renders this last passage thus; "either in this age, or that that which is to come."

With a hope, dear brother, to call your attention to a subject, on which we presume you have never contemplated,—we now inform you, that we do not believe that the judgment, of which we read in Matt. xxv. has allusion to a future state of existence; but was delivered as a prophecy of events which took place in the generation in which the Saviour lived on earth. And this we pledge ourselves to show is maintained by the connexion in which the passage lies. To this view, you may easily assist yourself, if you will read the latter part of the 23d, the whole of the 24th, and the whole of the 25th, in due connexion; taking special care to notice what the Saviour was so particular in stating in ch. xxiii. 36,

"Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."—xxiv. 34, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." When you come to the beginning of the 25th chapter, and read; "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins," pause, and ask, when? Then go back and get the answer. When you come to the last paragraph, and read; "When the son of man shall come in his glory," &c. pause and look back to the 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 verses of the 24th chapter, and you will have the subject in its due connexion.

Should the prejudices of your religious education cause your mind to rise against what will be now perfectly clear, and should you say; it cannot be that Jesus came in his glory with his holy angels, in that generation, to reward men according to their works, you may turn to Matt. xvi. 27, 28, which reads thus; "For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom." And if further confirmation be necessary, look at the same in Mark and Luke. Look also at Matt. x. 23, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the son of man be come."

Should you finally succeed in obtaining the result of a candid investigation of this scripture in the 25th of Matthew, you will be satisfied that the whole discourse related to the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, the Jews, and the Jewish polity; and to other events which took place in the same generation, in which the Saviour lived on earth.

Your second object is an attempt to refute the argument, which the believer in Jesus endeavours to support, in favour of Universal salvation, founded on the declaration of divine truth, that Jesus "tasted death for every man." But, dear brother, it must, we think, surprise you, when you come to consider what you have done with this weighty subject. You first acknowledge that "all fell in the loins of Adam, and be-

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came the subjects of the divine displeasure." You then apply the efficacy of the death of Jesus for all men, to universal redemption from this original sin. After laying these things down in a careful manner, you produce proof directly against the whole, by quoting Ezekiel xviii. 20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." By this passage we learn that it does not consist with divine justice to charge the sin of a father on an innocent child, nor the sin of a child on an innocent parent: and all this is perfectly consistent with sound reason. But, sir, this refutes all you say about our fall in the loins of Adam. By what authority, we ask, do you say that all mankind fell in the loins of Adam, and became the subjects of the divine displeasure?—Would you be willing to undertake to prove that our heavenly Father is, or ever was displeased with little infants for what Adam did? Where do you read any thing in support of a notion so entirely repugnant to common sense? In room of Adam's bringing all mankind under the divine displeasure, he did not bring himself into such a condition. God treated man as tenderly and as kindly after transgression as before, as far as we have any information. According to your sentiment, how did God manifest his *displeasure* towards all men? Why he laid all the guilt, which belonged to us, on account of Adam's sin, on his son Jesus Christ, so as to free us entirely! And this is the whole weight of God's displeasure, according to your statements!

After you dispose of the efficacy of the death of Jesus for all men, as above noticed, you proceed to say—"For our actual transgressions only are we accountable. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Our salvation from these is conditional. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." But what must we believe in order to be saved from our actual transgressions, according to your argument? Why we must believe that Jesus did not die for them, but only to

save us from Adam's sin. We must believe that the "wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." We must believe that the "soul that sinneth, it shall die." Well, sir, we do firmly believe that we have "all sinned and come short of the glory of God."—Now if we believe that we are not freely justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but believe that the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, and that the soul that sinneth, it shall die, shall we be all saved?

Concluded in our next.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, June 2, 1821.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

DIALOGUE CONTINUED.

Limitarian. In compliance with the agreement entered into during our late conversation, and urged by a sincere desire of detecting and exposing the lamentable errors into which I believe you to have fallen, I have been at some pains, and have sacrificed some conveniences in effecting this early interview. During the interval which has since elapsed, my thoughts have been much engrossed in meditating upon the awful consequences of imbibing false notions in divinity. The apostle's expression of "Damnable heresy!—God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," are words of awful import. They ought to excite within us the strictest inquiry after truth; and having obtained it, to induce also an inseparable adherence to its dictates. But let this suffice by way of preface, while we proceed more immediately to our proposed discussion. As there are several points, in which it is probable we differ, and the object of our interview, is to see what the Lord hath spoken in relation thereto, it is desirable that we should progress with regularity, beginning where the scripture itself begins,—with the fall of Adam,—that lamentable, that prolific source of "death and all our woe!"

Universalist. I am gratified by your prompt attention to our late engagement, in so soon procuring this interview. Nor will I impugn those mo-

tives, to which you attribute the very apparent interest you feel relative to the issue of our controversy. I give full credit to that sincerity of sympathy, by which you are actuated. But let me here premise one sentiment, which, in the event of your failing to overthrow my doctrine, I pray you to bear in remembrance. It is this: as neither of us can certainly aver our elucidations of scripture to be exempt from error, or that our conclusions naturally spring from this fountain of truth;—as we cannot infallibly assert how far the head may be wrong, and yet the heart be essentially right,—let no unbrotherly feelings or criminations be felt or expressed; but let that charity which covereth a multitude of sins, attest to the genuineness of our christianity. For if the kingdom of heaven imparted to either or both of us, be but as the grain of mustard seed; that little, is as much, and as truly the kingdom of heaven, as though it had become a great tree;—and upon Calvinistic principles, if this kingdom be but begun in any heart, it must increase until it becomes the kingdom of glory.—How then can fallible mortals like we, affirm, without a doubt, that the other is altogether in darkness and error, and totally destitute of grace? As an argument evincive of the propriety of these premises, let us recollect how he, "who spake as never man spake," acted when his disciples, who had been daily witnesses to his doctrine and miracles, were so tinctured with error, as to consider him in the light of an earthly prince, and to crave for themselves the possession of ambitious and temporal preferments. They were, I had almost said, the most incredulous sceptics on several of those points of doctrine,—to doubt which, now, is more than immorality—a cause of christian persecution, and non-fellowship. Instance their opinion of the Saviour's proper character, the necessity of his death, and the fact of his resurrection. But what did this ignorance or unbelief on the part of any of these brethren and friends of Jesus, produce upon his part? Was it exclusion from the rest of his flock?—Banishment from his most intimate society?—Deprivation from a seat at his table? No! They were still his disciples, no anathemas were denounced upon them! Still his language was,

"My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Even as my Father hath sent me, so send I you. In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid," &c. Now if this be true, and ignorance and doubt, with far less evidence than these favoured disciples possessed, similarly affect plain and humble christians, whose minds may be bewildered in the fogs of polemical mysteries;—Where is the justice, or the example for orthodoxy, in fulminating decrees of excommunication against brethren otherwise unoffending and virtuous; or for individuals in looking askance upon each other, as though their honest difference of opinion assuredly constituted them the notorious and confirmed children of the devil?

Lim. You cannot have been so long in fellowship with that body of christians, from whom you have seceded, and yet remain ignorant of the principles they adduce in justification of their conduct, in cutting off from their communion, those who may have embraced errors of dangerous tendency. You cannot have forgotten what the apostle says about cutting off those who "troubled" the church in his day; or his observation, so appropriate in this case, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Or, what is still more severely just, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema maranatha"! But this topic we have not met to dispute. If we had, I doubt not being able to vindicate my brethren in this means of maintaining gospel purity!

Uni. I will not prolong this digression further, than to state, that as I have quoted the Saviour's example, in cases of the most palpable error, and positive unbelief; of which, even to be very partially guilty in these days of gospel purity, ensures all that persecution which the civil law will tolerate, and, so far as christian doctors can produce it, the award also of eternal condemnation: and as it is impossible that Jesus can at any time have been inconsistent with himself, so it will be a difficulty insuperable in its nature, to justify any church or individual in acting upon the present contrary, though popular ground. We will now open our bible,

and, agreeably to your proposal, consider the doctrine commonly accepted under the title of "the fall of man," a term not known in scripture, and against the legitimacy of which, I must at the outset protest.

Lim. This protest is only playing upon the sound of words. What if the exceptionable term be not syllabically expressed! You cannot surely deny, that it is substantially demonstrated in the bible! Does not our Confession of Faith state, and its margin refer you to the proper proof in various texts of the scripture, that "God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it." But "Our first parents by their disobedience, in eating the forbidden fruit, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all; all being dead in sin. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind; the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation, being conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal." In making this appeal to the Confession of Faith, I mean no contravention of our engagement, to make scripture the test of our doctrine; I do it only, because it conveys my ideas more clearly and concisely than I could of myself have detailed them. And now let the inquiry be repeated; Does it affect the merit of the doctrine under consideration at all, whether it be expressed by the twelve letters, "the fall of man," or in the manner above described.

Uni. Admitting the plausibility of this use of phrases, foreign to scripture language, yet would it not better subserve the intention of all arguments in divinity, to make use of those which are familiar to the scripture? Against this latter method there can be no objection, unless theology be a science, more than all others, deficient in language, by which its own terms can be expressed; a charge we cannot for a moment suppose to be just. Its doctrines can and ought to be specified and maintained, by every disputant, with

the same language in which inspiration has caused them to be penned. But as you have contended for the propriety of the words, "the fall of man," and stated that your Confession of Faith, in its margin, refers to the proper texts for demonstration; if you please, we will make a direct application to these texts, and examine whether they be so full to the point, as to justify the doctrine which claims its support from their testimony.

Lim. I am the more pleased with your proposition, for an immediate reference, because, though I have not examined these texts myself, yet, when I consider how celebrated for learning and piety, were the Reverend compilers—that it has now withstood the hatred and opposition of centuries, I take it as undeniable, that its scripture authorities are so abundant and convincing, that your opposition will soon be hushed, and our dispute on this point be ended, which being effectually accomplished, that which follows, and would if a failure here should occur, be protracted to some length, must consequently be shortened.

But to proceed; the first item cited from the Confession, reads, "God created man upright, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it." And now let us turn to the establishing proof. The margin refers us to Gen. ii. 16, 17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."—Here then is the proof.

Uni. Of what is it the proof?

Lim. Of that which it asserts; viz. that if Adam and Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit, neither they nor we had been subject to death and the contingencies of mortality, but would have lived for ever. The keeping of that simple command "had been unto life;" but our first parents by this sin, "lost their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them; whereby a threefold death came upon us all, viz. death spiritual, death temporal, and death eternal."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The continuation of the Review of "The Presbyterian Magazine" in our next.

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